AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for providing a personal audio alert message (PAAM) to a called party and a calling party during a call connection, the method comprising:

querying a PAAM database in response to a call origination by the calling party, wherein the database stores a plurality of predefined PAAM stringspersonal messages to be delivered to the called party and the calling party;

receiving one or more PAAM strings from the database in response to the query;

returning a first PAAM string, from the one or more PAAM strings, identifying the called party to the calling party;

routing the call to the called party;

returning a second PAAM string and a third PAAM string, from the one or more PAAM strings from the database, to the called party in the routed call, wherein the second PAAM string is a salutation to the called party and a third PAAM string identifies the calling party to the called party; and

connecting the call if the called party accepts the call.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

presenting the first PAAM string to the calling party while the call is being routed to the called party.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

presenting the second PAAM string and the third PAAM string to the called party before the called party answers the call.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising:

receiving a return called party response indicating the disposition of the call;

returning a fourth PAAM string based on the return called party response to the calling party, the fourth PAAM string indicating call status; and

processing the call based on the return called party response.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the called party response relates to at least one of accepting the call, rejecting the call, forwarding the call, placing the call on hold and connecting to voice-mail.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

determining whether the calling party is a PAAM service subscriber; and

if the calling party is determined to be a PAAM service subscriber, then based on the calling party number, retrieving the first PAAM string from the PAAM database.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

determining whether the called party is a PAAM service subscriber; and

if the called party is determined to be a PAAM service subscriber, then based on a called party identifier, retrieving the second and third PAAM strings from the database.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the second PAAM string is retrieved from at least one of a calling party's record and a called party's record that are stored in the PAAM database.

10. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the third PAAM string is retrieved from at least one of a calling party's record and a called party's record that are stored in the PAAM database.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

retrieving the first PAAM string from a called party's record, wherein the first PAAM string defines a rule set for handling the call from the calling party identified in the called party's record; and

processing the call in accordance with the rule set defined by the first PAAM string from the called party's record.

12. (Currently Amended)   A network apparatus for providing a personal audio alert message (PAAM) to a called party and a calling party during a call, the method comprising:

a switch to receive the call from the calling party; and

a memory for storing one or more PAAM strings <u>which are personal messages to be delivered to the called party and the calling party</u>, wherein responsive to the call from the calling party, the switch queries the memory for the one or more PAAM strings, returns a first PAAM string identifying the called party to the calling party, returns a second PAAM string to the called party that represents a salutation to the called party, returns a third PAAM string to the called party that identifies the calling party to the called party, and connects the call if the called party answers the call.

13. (Original) The network apparatus of claim 12, wherein the switch further receives a return called party response indicating the disposition of the call and returns a fourth PAAM string indicating call status based on the return called party response to the calling party.

14. (Original) The network apparatus of claim 13, wherein the switch further processes the call based on the return called party response.

15. (Original) The network apparatus of claim 12, wherein the switch further determines whether the calling party is a PAAM service subscriber and if the calling party is determined to be a PAAM service subscriber, then based on the calling party number, the switch further retrieves the first PAAM string from the memory.

16. (Original) The network apparatus of claim 12, wherein the switch further determines whether the called party is a PAAM service subscriber and if the called party is determined to be a PAAM service subscriber, then based on a called party identifier, the switch further retrieves the second and third PAAM strings from the memory.

17 (Original) The network apparatus of claim 12, wherein the first PAAM string in the memory defines a rule set for handling the call from the calling party and wherein the switch processes the call in accordance with the rule set defined by the first PAAM string defining the rule set.

18. (Currently Amended) A machine-readable medium having stored thereon a plurality of executable instructions, the plurality of instructions comprising instructions to:

query a personal audio alert message (PAAM) database in response to a call by the calling party, wherein the PAAM database stores ~~a plurality of predefined PAAM strings~~personal messages to be delivered to the called party and the calling party;

receive one or more PAAM strings from the database in response to the query;

return a first PAAM string, from the one or more PAAM strings, identifying a called party to the calling party;

route the call to the called party;

return a second PAAM string and a third PAAM string, from the one or more PAAM strings, to the called party in the routed call, wherein the second PAAM string is a salutation to the called party and a third PAAM string identifies the calling party to the called party; and

connect the call if the called party answers the call.

19. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 0 having stored thereon further executable instructions to:

present the first PAAM string to the calling party while the call is being routed to the called party.

20. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 18 having stored thereon further executable instructions to:

present the second PAAM string and the third PAAM string to the called party before the called party answers the call.

21. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 18 having stored thereon further executable instructions to:

    receive a return called party response indicating the disposition of the call;

    return a fourth PAAM string based on the return called party response to the calling party, the fourth PAAM string indicating call status; and

    process the call based on the return called party response.

22. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 18 having stored thereon further executable instructions to:

    determine whether the calling party is a PAAM service subscriber; and

    retrieve the first PAAM string from the PAAM database based on the calling party number, if the calling party is determined to be a PAAM service subscriber.

23. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 18 having stored thereon further executable instructions to:

    determine whether the called party is a PAAM service subscriber; and

    retrieve the second and third PAAM strings from the database based on a called party identifier, if the called party is determined to be a PAAM service subscriber.

24. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 18 having stored thereon further executable instructions to:

    retrieve the first PAAM string from a called party's record, wherein the first PAAM string defines a rule set for handling the call from the calling party identified in the called party's record; and

    process the call in accordance with the rule set defined by the first PAAM string from the called party's record.

25. (Currently Amended)   A method for presenting personal audio alert messages to a called party and a calling party during a call, the method comprising:

originating the call to the called party by the calling party;

determining whether a personal audio alert message (PAAM) service is enabled;

searching a local calling party PAAM database for a called party number if the PAAM service is enabled;

if the called party number is found in the local calling party database, retrieving a personalized first PAAM string associated with the called party number from the local calling party PAAM database, the personalized first PAAM string including a personalized message relating to the identity of the called party and the personalized first PAAM string is stored in the local calling party PAAM database by the calling party;

presenting the calling party with the personalized first PAAM string while the call is being routed to the called party; and

if the called party number is not found in the local calling party database, presenting the calling party with a generic first PAAM string, the generic first PAAM string including a generic message relating to the identity of the called party.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein the generic first PAAM string is generated by:

retrieving the identity of the called party based on the called party number using an automatic number identification (ANI) look-up.

27. (Original) The method of claim 25, further comprising:

if the PAAM service is not enabled, the local called party PAAM database is not searched and the called party is not presented with the personalized second and third PAAM strings.

28. (Original) The method of claim 25, further comprising:

connecting the call by the calling party to the called party;

searching a local called party PAAM database for a calling party number if the PAAM service is enabled;

if the calling party number is found in the local called party database, retrieving personalized second and third PAAM strings associated with the calling party number from the local called party PAAM database, the personalized second and third PAAM strings, the personalized second PAAM string including a personalized salutation to the called party and the personalized third PAAM string including a personalized message relating to the identity of the calling party;

presenting the called party with the personalized second and third PAAM strings; and

if the calling party number is not found in the local called party database, presenting the called party with a generic second and third PAAM strings, the generic second PAAM string including a generic salutation to the called party and the generic third PAAM string including a generic message relating to the identity of the calling party.

29. (Original) The method of claim 25, further comprising:

connecting the call between the called party and the calling party after the called party picks up the call; and

releasing the PAAM service resources after the call is connected.

30. (Original) The method of claim 25, further comprising:

receiving a fourth PAAM string based on a return called party response, the fourth PAAM string indicating call status; and

processing the call based on the return called party response.

31. (Original) The method of claim 30, wherein the called party response relates to at least one of accepting the call, rejecting the call, forwarding the call, placing the call on hold and connecting to voice-mail.

32. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for providing a personal audio alert service to a called party and a calling party during a call connection, the apparatus comprising:

a memory to store called party information, calling party information and associated personal audio alert message (PAAM) information;

a PAAM interface to search the memory for a called party number and to retrieve a personalized first PAAM string from the associated PAAM information if the called party number is found in the memory;

a PAAM module to receive the personalized first PAAM string and to generate a first personalized message including the personalized first PAAM string when a call is originated, the first personalized message including an identifier for the called party and the personalized first PAAM string is stored in the memory by the calling party; and

an output device to output the generated first personalized message to the calling party while the call is connected and to further output a generic message to the calling party including a generic PAAM string including an identifier relating to the identity of the called party if the called party number is not found in the memory.

33. (Original) The apparatus of claim 32, if the called party number is not found in the memory, the PAAM module further generates the generic message including the generic PAAM string and forwards the generated generic message to the output device.

34. (Original) The apparatus of claim 33, wherein the PAAM interface searches the memory for a calling party number and retrieves a personalized second PAAM string and a personalized third PAAM string from the associated PAAM information if the calling party number is found when the call is received, and the PAAM module further receives the personalized second and personalized third PAAM strings and generates a second personalized message including the personalized second and personalized third PAAM strings when the call is received, the second personalized message including an identifier for the calling party.

35. (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, wherein the PAAM module further generates a salutation to be output to the called party included in the second personalized message.

36. (Original) The apparatus of claim 34 wherein the output device outputs the generated second personalized message to the called party.

37. (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, wherein the PAMM module further generates a second generic message that includes an identifier for the calling party if the calling party number is not found in the memory and the output device further outputs the second generic message to the called party.

38. (Original) The apparatus of claim 37, wherein the PAAM module further generates a salutation to be output to the called party included in the second generic message.

39. (Original) The apparatus of claim 32, wherein the output device is a display.

40. (Original) The apparatus of claim 32, wherein the output device is a speaker.